



# IDENTIFICATION OF SKILLS TO MAKE SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING EFFECTIVE AT SECONDARY LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

Education plays an important role in moulding the future of an individual especially in a knowledge based economy. As knowledge and information is at our finger tips, students should be trained in imbibing values and developing skills like soft skills, hard skills and process skills while learning social science. Social science being a school subject should provide opportunities for students to develop skills which will help them to learn the content along with acquiring skills. Students have some problems in learning social science at secondary level. Most of the problems can be solved if we give importance to the process of learning and thereby acquiring skills. Social science process skills enables learner to develop higher order thinking skills or intellectual skills and makes learning effective.

**KEY WORDS:** Knowledge based Economy, Soft Skills, Hard Skills, Process Skills, Thinking skills.

The world is changing at a rapid pace. Therefore curriculum too has to be changed to meet the demands of changing society. Technological development has made the life of the people much easier. The work place is also changing along with changes in information technology and automation. Globalisation has opened up world for international interaction. At work centres, personal risk has increased with more autonomy and responsibility. Considering the changes that have been taking place in the world, Social Science education should develop certain skills in students. These skills can be developed only through training and sustained effort. In the present world knowledge is at our finger tips. What is needed is to acquire a wide range of skills and values which helps an individual to adapt to the changing environment. Skilled labour is becoming more valuable than unskilled labour in an economy directly based on production, distribution and use of knowledge and information. The investigator conducted a survey to identify the difficulties in learning Social Science at secondary level. In teaching Social Science at Secondary level more importance is given to content. Students are encouraged to memorise facts. In this study, the investigator tried to identify the skills which are to be developed in students in order to make Social Science learning effective.

A social science teacher faces a unique set of challenges than the teachers of any other discipline. Seligman defined "Social sciences as those mental or cultural sciences which deals with the activities of the individual as a member of the group" while Fairchild considers "Social sciences as a general term for all the sciences which are concerned with human affairs". From the above definitions it is clear how vast is the scope of social science. As a subject for study, Social Science can influence the behaviour of the learner, that is, the social political, economic, and cultural and to form attitude and develop values. Social science teacher is confronted with the task of equipping the learners with the content and skills for respective discipline as learning goals. Different disciplines included in social science are History, Geography, Political science, Economics, Sociology, Philosophy, Law etc. Teacher has to decide what to teach, how to teach and how to assess learning. Some people consider Social Science subject taught in schools as irrelevant and useless to meet the needs of future. This perception has been formed in the minds of the people because they were not taught to use their higher order thinking skills. They did not get opportunity to develop skills in learning Social Science. They were not taught to appreciate the past glories of the country. They were taught only to mug up the content for examination. In this study investigator attempts to find out the difficulties faced by students in learning Social Science at Secondary level and also to identify the skills to be developed in students as a part of learning social science.

## REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES:

Annamalai, K (2015) conducted "A study on Competence of Higher Secondary School students of Villupuram district in relation to Social intelligence, Social adjustment and Social skills". In the study the investigator mentions that skills can be divided into 'domain general' and 'domain specific skills'. It is also explained that social rules and relations are related, communicated and changed in verbal and non verbal ways. The process of learning such skills is called socialization. Girija Kumari (2013) in her study "Scholastic backwardness, Science process skills and scientific creativity of upper primary students" defines science process skills as those competencies involved in the process that are required to find out concepts and evidences in science and analyze them so as to reach meaningful conclusions. Among the different process skills only five skills were selected for her study. They were predicting, classifying, using number relations, communicating and inferring. In the study "Skill development in social science subjects: A proposed Methodology" (Mondeja-Jmenez, 2011), it is explained

that different courses have the generic and specific skills to be obtained and for that different scenarios must be proposed for each of the teaching forms, including both class and non class time forms, and also different organisational forms must be used for theory classes, practical classes, group work and independent work. The study also reveals the different ways of assessing the acquisition of skills by the learner using practical –theoretical tests and observation techniques. From the review of related studies it is concluded that different skills can be acquired by studying different subjects both inside and outside classroom.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Investigator conducted a Survey to understand the problems in learning Social Science by students studying in Secondary classes (9th and 10th Standard) in Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala. For this investigator prepared questionnaire for Secondary school students to identify the problems in learning Social Science. The questionnaire was administered to 120 students (63 Boys and 57 Girls) studying in Government and Aided schools of Thiruvananthapuram district. The investigator depended on secondary sources to identify various skills to be developed while learning social science. The investigator being a social science teacher for the last seventeen years also used her teaching experience as well as colleagues' experiences as a source for the study. Investigator conducted unstructured interview with Social Science teachers (N=5) to understand the methodology of teaching. The present study is concerned with finding out the problems in learning social science by the students studying in the secondary schools in Thiruvananthapuram district. This study is limited to identifying certain skills to be developed while learning Social Science at secondary level only.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The present study is concerned with two objectives.

1. To identify the difficulties in learning Social Science by the students studying in Secondary classes.
2. To identify the skills to make Social Science learning effective at Secondary level.

For the study investigator adopted survey method. Questionnaire was administered to 120 students studying in Secondary classes. Questionnaire was mainly concerned with difficulties in learning social science related to text book. Another part of the questionnaire was concerned with the method of learning social science.

1. **Response of students regarding difficulties in learning social science with regard to textbook.**

Table 1

Sl. No.	Difficulty in learning social science regarding textbook	Number of students	%
1	Difficulty in understanding terms	20	16.7
2	Very lengthy chapters	94	78.3
3	Reading creates boredom	70	58.3
4	Difficult to keep years and events in memory	80	66.7

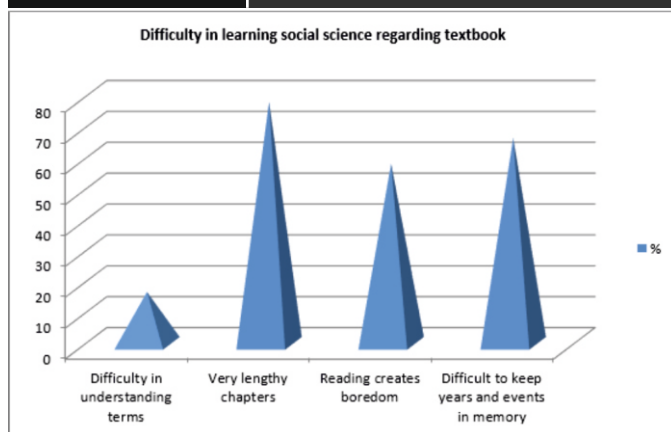


Figure 1: Difficulty in learning social science with regard to textbook

It is clear from the table that 94 students (78.3%) responded that lengthy chapters are difficult to study. In the text book some chapters are very lengthy. 80 students (66.7%) find it difficult to keep in memory the years and events in social science text books. For 70 students (58.3%) reading textbook creates boredom and for 20 students (16.7%) there is difficulty in understanding terms mentioned in textbooks. Therefore it can be concluded that small chapters with clear description of difficult terms would be helpful for students in learning social science textbook. It would also be helpful to avoid boredom to students. Clear time lines, pictures, activities to do etc should also be included in textbooks which would help students to create interest in subject.

## 2. Response of students supporting different ways of learning social science

Table 2

Sl. No.	Different ways of learning social science	Number of students	%
1	Reading text by teacher and explanation	70	58.33
2	Conducting activities	91	75.83
3	Teacher's giving notes	48	40
4	Self learning	52	43.33
5	Learning using audio visual aids	94	78.33

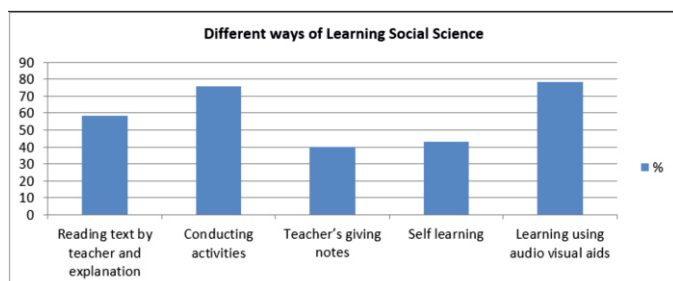


Figure 2: Different ways of learning social science

It is clear from table 2 that 94 students (78.33%) like to learn social science using audio visual aids. 91 students (75.83%) like conducting activities including group activities for learning social science. 70 students (58.33%) like teacher explaining the content in the text book and 52 students (43.33%) through self learning, 48 students (40%) like teachers notes for learning social science.

Thus it can be concluded that audio visual aids plays an important role in learning social science. Learning by doing strategy is also useful in social science learning as majority of students like to learn social science through various activities. Learning through activities helps to develop skills in students.

## 3. Other difficulties related to learning social science are the following:

- The content for study included in social science at secondary level is vast. It creates a lot of stress and strain in students at the time of examination. For this teacher can guide students to prepare for examinations.
- There is less opportunity for students to interact with community to have direct experience. Students should be provided opportunity to conduct survey, visit various institutions, places of historical importance, interact with experts in different fields etc.

II. The second part of the study is concerned with identifying skills that can be attained while studying social science. Man is a social animal. He cannot live in isolation. Certain skills are necessary for healthy social interaction. Students are to be given opportunity for attaining these skills in schools.

Attainment of these skills will enable the learner to have better relationship among other learners, teachers, parents and society at large. The children who are studying in the schools are the citizens of tomorrow. Thus school can equip students to meet the challenges of future.

### A. Skills:

Skill is the ability to do something that comes from training, experience or practice. Skills can be acquired or developed through direct experience and training. Skills are second form of knowledge that can be learned through direct instruction. Skills have a specific set of identifiable operations or procedures. Certain skills can be acquired through learning of any school subject or through various activities conducted in the school. Such skills can be called personal skills. Personal skills include soft skills and hard skills. Process skills are yet another set of skills that can be acquired through learning of different subjects. Different skills can be acquired or developed through learning social science in classrooms. Each subject has its own process skills.

### Personal skills:

Personal skills are the skills that we are born with, our natural talents or things we develop through our experience and deliberate practice. There are several personal skills that are to be imbibed as children grow. Education is not only acquiring knowledge, but development of body, mind and spirit. Education should enable individual to lead a successful life. Certain skills are to be attained which will help the individual for wholesome development. It will also help the individual in all walks of life. At secondary level in schools, teachers can train the students to acquire skills while teaching. Personal skills are those skills which we possess and consider as our strength. Personal skills are classified into two namely, soft skills and hard skills.

### Soft skills:

Soft skills are more general, intangible qualities or attributes we possess that enhance our interactions with others. They can be related to our attitude, outlook, personality, emotions, habits, communication style and social manners. Even though soft skills are not taught separately in schools, they are taught as a part of school activities. While teaching social science through 'learning by doing' strategy learner gets more opportunity to interact with others to build and manage relationships. These skills are useful for group work and for presenting information. Some of the soft skills are the following

- Team Spirit:** Team spirit is the feeling of pride and loyalty that exists among the members of a team and that makes them want their team to do well or to be the best.
- Sociability:** Sociability is a personality trait, the ability to be fond of the company of others; people who are sociable are inclined to seek out the opportunity of social contact with others.
- Interpersonal skills:** Interpersonal skills are the life skills that we use every day when we communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups.
- Negotiation Skills:** Negotiation is a method by which people settle differences. It is a process by which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument and dispute. In any negotiation three elements are important namely, attitude, knowledge and interpersonal skills.
- Positive attitude:** Attitude is a mental position relative to a way of thinking or being a leaning toward that which you believe. A Positive attitude is, therefore, the inclination to generally be in an optimistic, hopeful state of mind.
- Self motivation:** It is the force that drives you to do things. It is the ability to do what to be done without influence from other people or situations. People with self motivation can find a reason and strength to complete a task, even when challenging without giving up or needing another to encourage them.
- Communication skill:** The ability to convey information to another effectively and efficiently.
- Problem solving skills:** The term problem solving skills refers to not only one's ability to solve math problems, but also a number of academic and real life situations that require the ability to dissect problems and effectively resolve them.
- Critical thinking:** Critical thinking involves the evaluation of sources such as data, facts, observable phenomenon and research findings. Specific skills related to critical thinking are Analysis, clarification, evaluation, explanation, inference, interpretation, objectivity, problem solving and reasoning.
- Decision making skill:** Decision making is regarded as the cognitive process resulting of a belief or course of action among several alternative possibilities. It is the skill to solve problems by selecting one course of action from several possible alternatives.
- Creative thinking skills:** Creative thinking is the process we use to develop

ideas that are unique, useful and worthy of further elaboration.

- l. *Self awareness*: It is the conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings. It is the capacity for introspection and the ability to recognise oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals.
- m. *Empathy*: Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference, i.e., the capacity to place oneself in another's position.
- n. *Coping with stress*: It is the process by which a person consciously attempts to master, minimize or tolerate stressors and problems in life.
- o. *Coping with emotions*: This implies that whether there is good or bad news one should not lose control over oneself, however one should not suppress emotions.
- p. *Social skill* is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. It includes carrying out plans and working together by respecting others, self controlling and sharing ideas and experiences.

#### Hard skills:

Hard skills are more specific and are often associated with a task or activity. They include certain abilities and knowledge about an area of focus and can be easily quantified and evaluated. They are technically or academically oriented.

Examples –using computer, geographical equipments etc.

#### B. Process skills in Social Science

Process skills are those skills which are required to process information. They are also the intellectual skills which will finally lead to output or content. Every subject has certain process skills to learn that subject. The process skills to learn mathematics or languages are different from the process skills to learn social science. For learning process skills students are given training in scientific way of learning the subject. It is the scientific way of solving problems in a subject. When a student completes his /her secondary course, he /she should be well equipped in using various process skills. In this study, the investigator identifies various process skills to be developed in learner while studying social science. The investigator has identified the following process skills for learning social science at secondary level.

1. Observation means the active acquisition of information from a visual source. It can be a real scene, object, picture or even any written or printed material. Different audio visual aids can be used for observation in social science.
2. Collecting information: It is the process of gathering data from primary or secondary sources. Data can be collected through group interaction, from any audio and visual materials.
3. Classification: It is an arrangement of people or things into groups based on ways that they are alike. From the data collected, learners can classify it based on similarities or differences. The classified data can be presented visually.
4. Comparison: It is the act of looking at things to see how they are similar or different. After classification data can be compared easily.
5. Infer: It is to form an opinion from evidence or to reach a conclusion based on known facts. Thinking is based on existing facts.
6. Analysis: The action of taking something apart in order to study it. The cause and effect relationship is identified in the process of analysis.
7. Deduce: Arrive at a fact or conclusion by reasoning, draw as a logical conclusion. There is evaluation of what has been derived.
8. Generalisation: A generalisation is the formulation of general concepts from specific instances by abstracting common properties.
9. Prediction: Say or estimate that a specific thing will happen in the future or will be a consequence of something.
10. To use equipments: To use tools needed for special purposes. It may include Map, Globe, Models, Geographical instrument, computer software, etc which are used in learning social science. Computers are inevitable for teaching and learning. Learners are also to be trained to develop presentation skills using computer, skills in using internet, skills in using social media etc.

Teaching strategies to develop the above skills include the activities like conducting discussion/group discussion, presentations, Role play /Drama , Data analysis, conducting surveys, field trips, debate, quiz, project, seminar, preparing charts and models , conducting cooperative and collaborative learning activities , models of teaching like jurisprudence model, inquiry learning model, and

advance organiser model , conducting mock parliament, exhibitions , preparing picture albums/digital albums, slide presentations etc. These learning strategies help students in developing /applying various skills which will make the learners able, competent and responsible citizens. The choice of the above strategies depends on the learning outcomes and content. Teachers should be well trained in teaching through different strategies.

#### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- I. The investigator for the present study conducted a survey to find out the difficulties faced by students in learning social science. Questionnaire was administered to 120 students studying in government and aided schools of Thiruvananthapuram district. The following are the findings of the study.

1. It was found from the study that 78.38% of students consider lengthy chapters in the textbook as a difficulty in learning social science. This was followed by difficulty in keeping the facts in memory(66.7%), followed by reading textbook creates boredom (58.3%) and finally difficulty in understanding terms given in the textbook (16.4%)..
2. Regarding different ways of learning social science, 94 students (78.33%) likes to learn social science using audio visual aids. 91 students (75.83%) like conducting activities in classroom for learning social science. 70 students (58.33%) like teacher explaining the content in the textbook and 52 students (43.33%) likes self learning. 48 students (40%) like teacher dictating notes for learning social science.
3. Other difficulties regarding learning of social science are
  - a. The content for study included in social science at secondary level is vast, which creates stress and strain at the time of examination.
  - b. There is less opportunity for students to interact with community and lacks direct experience

- II. In this study, the investigator identified personal skills and process skills to be developed in students when learning social science. Personal skills can be classified into soft skills and hard skills. Important soft skills include, Team spirit, Sociability, Interpersonal skills, Negotiation skills, Positive attitude, Self motivation , Communication skills, Problem solving skills , Critical thinking skills, Decision making skills, Creative thinking skills, Self awareness, , Empathy, Coping with stress, emotion, etc. Hard skills are more specific and associated with a task or activity. They are technically or academically oriented. The process skills in learning social science include Observation, Collecting data, Classification, Comparison, Infer, Analysis, Deduce, Generalisation, Prediction, and using equipments.

#### CONCLUSION:

Students will be interested in learning only when they are active. Positive and interesting activities without creating confusion in learners, without suppressing their views, opportunities for creativity, should be provided in learning social science. Social science is not merely learning facts but developing skills, forming attitudes and appreciations. There is also production of knowledge, transmission of knowledge and transfer of knowledge.

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